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I, LEANNE MYNOTT, MANAGER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. 2003906855 for a patent by BEL-AMAND BRE ENTERPRISES PTY LTD as filed on 11 December 2003.

WITNESS my hand this
Twenty-fourth day of December 2004

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Regulation 3.2

Bel-amand Bre Enterprises Pty Ltd

AUSTRALIA

Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

for the invention entitled:

"A board game"

The invention is described in the following statement:

A board game

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to a board game. In a preferred embodiment according to the present invention, the board game is a skill based board game capable of providing scoring parity between players of different skill levels.

Background of the Invention

Skill and intellect based games are commonly used in educational institutions to both develop and educate students in an effort to provide a learning environment that is stimulating, effective and fun. Often being largely trivia based, these games commonly suffer from the problem however, where higher skilled or smarter students may easily account for their lesser skilled peers.

This can adversely effect the educational development of both brighter and less gifted students alike. Students constantly winning without being challenged and sufficiently stimulated are unlikely to strive to improve. On the other hand, students constantly being comfortably beaten may soon loose heart, and struggle to maintain interest. Students playing competitively against one another in contrast, typically strive to beat one another and it is this drive that often results in the attainment of a generally higher competency and skill levels.

Summary of the Invention

Preferred embodiments of the present invention seek to provide a method and an apparatus for a game wherein the scores of players of different skill levels are equalised, such that players of different skill levels may play competitively against one another.

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for playing a game including the step of selecting one pathway from a group including at least two pathways, said pathways defined by a series of regions, the regions in each pathway being selected from defined sets of regions corresponding to a selected level of difficulty so as to set the level of difficulty of traversing the pathway.

In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a an apparatus for playing a game including at least two pathways, said pathways defined by a series of regions, the regions in each pathway being selected from defined sets of regions corresponding to a selected level of difficulty so as to set the level of difficulty of traversing the pathway.

In an embodiment according to the present invention, the game may be a board game having at least two pathways that may be selected, with the regions being squares or spaces on the pathways that players land on with counters or playing tokens when traversing the pathways during play. Each of the spaces indicate the level of difficulty of a task to be performed or a question to be answered by a player landing on the space. For example, there may be four types of colour coded spaces, red, blue, green and yellow, with a player landing on any given space being required to answer correctly an educational based

question having a level of difficulty associated with the colour of the space (eg. red - hardest, blue - hard, yellow - easy, green - easiest) to continue their turn. As such, the overall level of difficulty of a traversing a given pathway may be determined by the ratio of red to blue to yellow to green spaces along the pathway for example.

This allows two or more players of different skill levels to play against each other with improved scoring parity by selecting pathways of different levels of difficulty to traverse such that the player of a higher skill level must perform tasks or answer questions of a typically harder standard than a player of a lesser skill level.

In one form of the invention, play alternates through a group of players. When it is a player's turn, the player rolls a dice and traverses their player token the number of moves shown on the dice along the selected board pathway. The player is then required to answer a question, the difficulty of which determined by the colour of the space landed upon as above, with the question to be asked determined by the colour of the space. A question card is drawn from a question card box, each card in the card box having a number of question and answer pairs of varying difficulties corresponding to the varying levels of difficulty associated with to the colours of the spaces. The question the player is to be asked from the drawn card is associated with and corresponds to the colour, or level of difficulty, of the space landed upon. If the question is answered correctly a point is scored on a tally sheet, and the player continues play re-throwing the dice. If the question is answered incorrectly, play moves to the next player. The game may be timed, with the

object of each player to either beat the score of one or more opponents, or to beat a previously established high score within a set time limit.

It will be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to the above however. For example, it is contemplated that embodiments of the present invention may be implemented by a computer program, each of the levels of difficulties of spaces may correspond to a physical or mental challenge or even trivia style questions, and there may be any number of different regions. Further, the levels of difficulty corresponding to any given space may be indicated textually, graphically or any other suitable manner, and therefor need not necessarily be colour coded as described above.

According to one practical embodiment of the present invention, the pathways are provided on the same board. Preferably, the pathways intersect and include one or more common zones where the pathways share a common set of spaces to heighten the interest level of players competing against one another. Where the pathways intersect or cross, players may be given the option of selecting the direction in which they continue their move.

Preferably, movement around the pathways is determined by the throwing of die each move that are suitably marked to provide a mathematical equation to be answered by the player, wherein the answer to the mathematical equation is the number of spaces traversed in the move. For example, a first die having numeric values indicated on each of its faces is rolled, followed by a second die having mathematical operators such as addition "+" and

subtraction "-" operators on each of its faces, and then a third die having numeric values indicated on each of its faces. The three die, when rolled in order, will form a mathematical equation. The player completes the mathematical equation and traverses their counter that amount of spaces along the pathway.

Preferably, the scoring between players of different abilities is further equalised by suitably selecting points awarded by each question answered correctly for each player prior to commencement of the game. For example, a smarter player may receive one point for each question answered correctly, while a player of lesser ability may have three points added to their tally for each question answered correctly. Therefor, it follows that players receiving one point per correct answer would need to answer correctly three times the number questions answered correctly as a player receiving three points per correct answer.

Preferably, the scoring between players of different abilities is further equalised by tasks or questions being arranged into sets corresponding to different levels of difficulty, whereby a more able player may select a harder set and a lesser skilled player may select an easier set. The sets of questions may correspond to different age groups for example, or in an alternative to different educational levels.

<u>Brief Description of the Drawings</u>

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic plan view of a board of a board game showing the possible pathways according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic plan view of the board of the board game of Figure 1 highlighting a first pathway in broken line;

Figure 3 is a schematic plan view of the board of the board game of Figure 1 highlighting a second pathway in broken line;

Figure 4 is a schematic plan view of the board of the board game of Figure 1 highlighting a third pathway in broken line;

Figure 5 is a schematic plan view of the board of the board game of Figure 1 highlighting a fourth pathway in broken line;

Figure 6 is a schematic plan view of the board of the board game of Figure 1 highlighting a fifth pathway in broken line; and

Figure 7 is a schematic front view of a question card of the board game of Figure 1.

Detailed Description

A schematic plan view showing the possible pathways of a board 2 of a board game according to an embodiment of the present invention is shown in Figures 1 to 6. The board 2 consists of two intersecting triangular pathways 4, 6, the intersection 8 of these providing a range of possible pathways that may be selected to set the level of difficulty of the game as will be described later.

The pathways are defined by a series of regions in the form of spaces or squares (not shown) selected to correspond to a selected level of difficulty, so as to set the level of

difficulty of traversing the pathway. During the game, players traverse a selected pathway by moving a symbolic counter or token along the spaces. When a player's token lands on a space, they are required to answer a question form a card 10 as shown in Figure 7 that is drawn from a box (not shown) of such questions cards 10. The question must be answered correctly for the player to proceed with a subsequent turn; the question required to be answered, and therefor the level of difficulty, is determined by the colour of the space the player lands on. The spaces on the pathways are coloured red, blue, yellow and green corresponding to red (hardest) 12, blue (hard) 14, yellow (easy) 16, and green (easiest) 18 questions respectively on the cards 10. As such it is the ratio of red to blue to yellow to green spaces on a particular pathway that determine the level of difficulty of traversing that pathway. It will be appreciated however, that the present invention is not limited to pathways having a series of colour coded spaces or questions, and these are provided to explain one possible embodiment of the invention.

The board 2 may also include a number of bonus squares providing additional points, free turns and re-throws of the dice for example.

The two intersecting triangular pathways 4, 6 combined include 24 red, 24 blue, 24 yellow and 24 green spaces preferably grouped where possible such that the different colours are substantially evenly distributed. In addition, the board 2 includes 4 start spaces, 1 red, 1 blue, 1 yellow and 1 green that are common to all pathways.

A first possible pathway 20 of the board 2 having a substantially rhombic shape is indicated by broken line in Figure 2. A subset of the spaces of the combined triangular pathways 4, 6, the rhombic pathway 20 includes a total of 24 spaces, the pathway 20 having 6 red, 6 blue, 6 yellow and 6 green spaces.

A second possible pathway 4 of the board 2 formed by a first of the triangular pathway 4 is indicated by broken line in Figure 3. The first triangular pathway 4 includes a total of 50 spaces, the pathway 4 having 21 red, 21 blue, 4 yellow and 4 green spaces.

A third possible pathway 6 of the board 2 formed by a second of the triangular pathway 6 is indicated by broken line in Figure 4. The second triangular pathway 6 again includes a total of 50 spaces, the pathway 6 having 3 red, 3 blue, 22 yellow and 22 green spaces.

A fourth possible pathway 22 of the board 2 formed by the peripheral portions of the intersecting triangular pathways 4, 6 is indicated by broken line in Figure 5. The substantially bow shaped pathway 22 includes a total of 76 spaces, the pathway 22 having 18 red, 18 blue, 20 yellow and 20 green spaces.

A fifth possible pathway 24 of the board 2 formed by the triangular pathways 4, 6 in combination is indicated by broken line in Figure 6. The hour glass profile of the pathway 24 includes a total of 96 spaces, having 24 red, 24 blue, 24 yellow and 24 green spaces. <u>This hour glass pathway 24 allows players to select a range of paths and directions that may possibly be followed when traversing the board 2, encouraging players to further</u>

challenge themselves and/or other players by either increasing or decreasing the level of difficulty thereby.

Aside from the board 2 and pathways indicated there on, the game also includes:

- one junior black mathematical operator six-sided die (three sides having an addition "+" operator and three sides having a subtraction "-" operator);
- one senior white mathematical operator six-sided die (one side having an addition "+" operator, one side having a subtraction "-" operator, one side having a multiplication "×" operator, one side having a division "÷" operator and two sides having " ");'
- two red six-sided die – 1 × (die with faces having a number of dots representing 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) and 1 × (die with faces having a number of dots representing 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and a blank" ") with blanks on any of the die providing a free re throw of the dice.
- two blue six-sided die – 1 × (die with faces marked "0","1", "2", "3", "4" and "5") and 1 × (die with faces marked "6","7", "8", "9", "10", and blank" ");
- two green twelve-sided die – (die with faces marked "0","1", "2", "3", "4", "5", "6","7", "8", "9", "10" and blank" "); and

question cards 7 shown schematically in Figure 7. Each card 10 has four questions corresponding to the colours of the spaces of the pathway – a red question (hardest), a blue question (hard), a yellow question (easy) and a green question (easiest). For example, the game may include 800 question cards 10 provided in 4 question card boxes that divide the questions into sets of 200 cards 10.

The play of a game according to an embodiment of the present invention will subsequently be described for example only:

The aim of the game is for the players is to attain as high a score as possible by answering as many questions correctly within a set time to beat the scores of fellow players, or a previously set personal high-score, or a predetermined goal score. The game allows players of differ skill levels to compete against one another in the same game with equalisation of the scores of the players irrespective of their individual skill levels. This provides a stimulating and challenging environment in which participants may maintain a high level of interest.

Step 1: Each player selects a pathway to traverse during play of the game.

The pathway selected determines the level of difficulty of traversing the board 2, and as such a more able player would select a pathway having a greater proportion of harder questions, such as the first triangular 4 or the bow pathways 22, while lesser skilled player would select a pathway having a higher proportion of easier questions, such as the rhombic 20 or second triangular pathways 6. A harder to traverse pathway used by a more skilled player will allow that player to compete against a lesser skilled player by making it harder for the more skilled player to score points and thereby equalising the scores of the players.

Step 2: Each player selects a question box to use.

The scoring between players of different abilities is further equalised by arranging the questions to be asked as part of the game into sets or boxes of cards 10 corresponding to

different levels of difficulty, whereby a more able player may select a harder set of questions and a lesser skilled player may select an easier set of questions. Each box of questions may correspond to different age groups as below, or alternatively to different educational levels. The boxes of questions are preferably coloured coded to provide easy recognition of the relative level of difficulty the box of questions. The boxes of questions of the board game may be directed towards the ages of 4 to 14 for example, where:

- the yellow box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 4 to 6 years;

- the yellow with black dots box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 5 to 7 years;

- the blue box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 6 to 8 years;

- the blue with black dots box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 7 to 9 years;

- the red box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 8 to 10 years;

- the red with black dots box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 9 to 11 years;

- the green box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 10 to 12 years;

- the green with black dots box of questions corresponds a level of difficulty substantially directed towards the age group of 11 to 14 years;

Of course, additional boxes of questions directed at older age groups could also be provided to facilitate an adult competing against a child playing the same game with substantial scoring parity for example.

Preferably, the questions focus on educating and providing readily useable life-skills to players while incorporating a competitive environment that is suitable for players of both differing skill levels and backgrounds to both entertain and hold the interest of the players. Advantageously the questions are fashioned in line with a specific education curriculum. Further, each of the questions may be presented in a range of suitable international languages, should geographical location so require. It is also considered that the sets of questions could be customised by players for entertainment, to target a specific area of learning, such as spelling for example, or to study for a degree, certificate or license. Such supplementary sets of questions may be made available for separate purchase to the game.

Step 3: Select the points to be awarded to each player for every correct answer during play of the game.

This provides an additional process for equalising the scores between players of different skill levels. For example a more gifted player may only be awarded one point per question answered correctly while a less gifted player may be awarded three points for each correct answer. In this instance, the more gifted player is required to answer three times as many questions correctly to match the score of their opponent. It is anticipated that a player would progress through all of the award points levels before changing to a harder question

box, for example progressing from three points awarded for each correct answer, to two points to one point.

Step 4: Each player then selects an individual counter or playing token with which to traverse the board 2 and selectively places the token randomly at one of the central starting spaces (not shown).

Step 5: To see who goes first a dice having numerical values or symbols on its faces is rolled by each of the players, with the player rolling the highest score going first and play then proceeding clockwise around the group of remaining players. The players each then individually select die to be used during play of the game. Three die are selected – two die having numerical values or symbols on their faces and one mathematical operator die having mathematical operators on its faces. The selected die are then thrown each turn in the order of the first number die, the mathematical operator die, and the second number die to form a mathematical equation.

The formed mathematical equation is then solved generally by the player who rolled the die, and the playing token of the player moved in a clockwise direction for example, around selected the selected pathway the number of spaces corresponding to the answer of the mathematical problem. When starting, in their first go players move their token off the start spaces towards one of the four corners of the rhombic pathway 20 that forms part of the pathway being used.

Players may use a note pad at any time in the game. A group of players may work out the mathematical question together, with play continuing with the current player progressing the amount thrown. As such, a player may further develop their mathematical skills and mental calculation with a little assistance, whilst playing the game.

Hence, a mathematical problem is attempted at least once every time a player has a turn, and it is thought this can aid in developing skills of mental calculation, number recognition and counting. In the case that the mathematical equation has a negative answer (eg. 2 – 5 = - 3), its thought the player may move their playing token in the reverse direction that amount, for example, counter-clockwise.

The difficulty of the mathematical equation to be solved may be controlled somewhat by both the numeric values and the mathematical operator of the die. For example, selecting a die having a larger numeric values and/or a greater number of faces such as the green twelve-sided die from above as opposed to the red or blue six-sided die may increase the difficulty of the formed mathematical equations. The difficulty of the mathematical equation to be solved may alternatively be increased by selecting a mathematical operator die such as the senior white mathematical operator six-sided die as described above, having harder operators such as the multiplication "x" and division "÷" operators as compared to just the addition "+" and subtraction "-" operators of the junior black mathematical operator six-sided die.

Step 6: Answering a question.

A question card 10 is then drawn from the player's selected question card box, with the player being required to answer the question on the card 10 corresponding to the colour, and therefor the level of difficulty, of the space landed upon. If the question is answered correctly, the predetermined award point(s) to be added to the players running tally for every correct answer are thus added, and the player continues their move by re-throwing the die. If the question is answered incorrectly, play moves to the next clockwise player.

Step 7: Conclusion of the game.

The game substantially concludes at the end of a predetermined playing time, with the winner the player with the highest score. As such, fast play is encouraged not just to maintain the interest level and concentration of all players, but to additionally maximise the number of points that may be scored. In an alternative form however, the game may be played in a solitaire manner, where an individual tries to better their own or someone else's previous high score, or a selected target score in the set time.

Advantageously, the game can be stopped at a given time by recording players' scores and the positions of players' tokens. Play may then be easily resumed at the same state at a later time.

Board games according to embodiments of the present invention are capable of removing barriers and opening up the possibilities relating to life, education, learning and employment, where the winner is the player who tries harder and isn't necessarily the player who is the smartest of the group. The game may be used in an educational surrounding to allow a child who is having learning difficulty to compete against a child

who sails through their studies, thereby both maintaining interest in the struggling child while challenging the more gifted child. Suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds, the scoring that embodiments provide mean that any winner of the game is not necessarily the most gifted or smartest of the group of players. By allowing players to compete with improved scoring equality may give players a better insight into others and methods for solving problems.

Embodiments according to the present invention may be applicable for use for example, as study aids in classrooms, at home as revision aids for reinforcing concepts taught in class possibly playing in a solitaire type mode trying to beat a personal high score; or when changing class levels as an overview into the new grade level prior to starting the new level.

In a particularly preferred embodiment according to the present invention, the equalising effect hereinbefore described results from a combination of the board game's elements of:

- selecting different pathways to be traversed having varying levels of difficulty to provide scoring parity between differently skilled players;
- selecting different levels of points to be awarded for correctly answered questions; and
- selecting different levels of questions to be answered.

It will be appreciate that the above described embodiment for example, provides for 120 different skill levels (ie, 4 substantially different pathways × 8 different question standard × 3 award points levels). Of course the range of any of these could be increased to provide even more skill levels.

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The above embodiments of the present invention have been described by way of example only and modifications and variations may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention described. For example, the described progression of play, questions asked, movement of player counters and use of colour coding described may all be the subject of suitable variation while still realising the present invention.

Throughout the specification, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated step or integer or group of steps or integers but not the exclusion of any other step or integer or group of steps or integers.

The reference to any prior art in this specification is not, and should not be taken as, an acknowledgement or any form of suggestion that that prior art forms part of the common general knowledge in Australia.

DATED this 11th day of December 2003

Bel-amand Bre enterprises Pty Ltd
By its Patent Attorneys:
DAVIES COLLISON CAVE

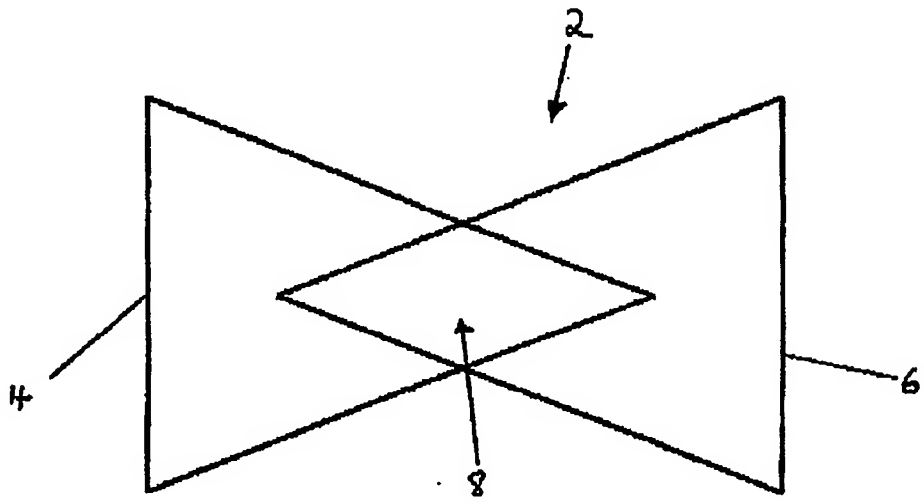

Figure 1

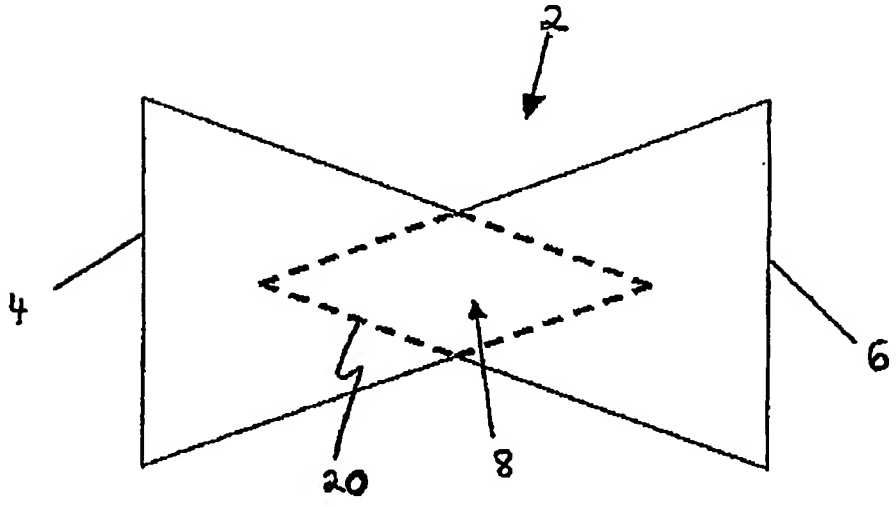

Figure 2

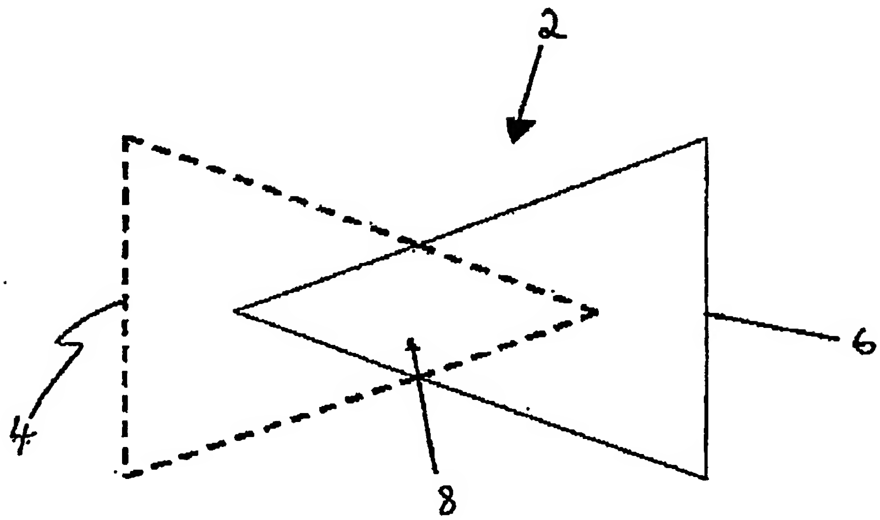

Figure 3

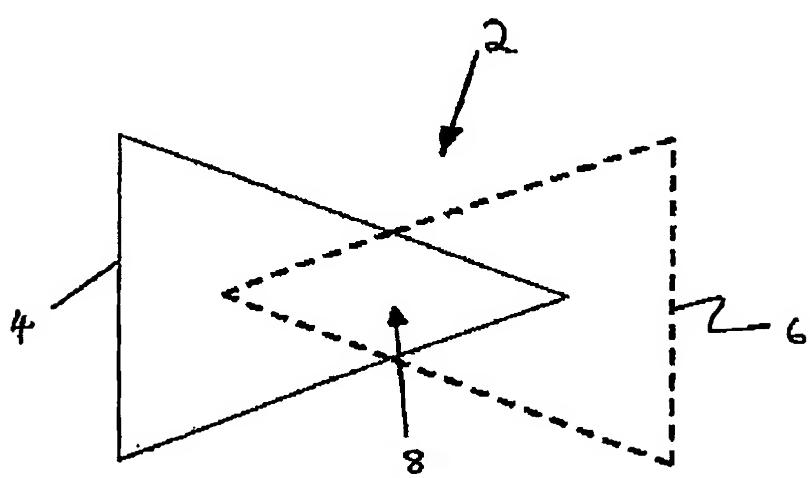

Figure 4

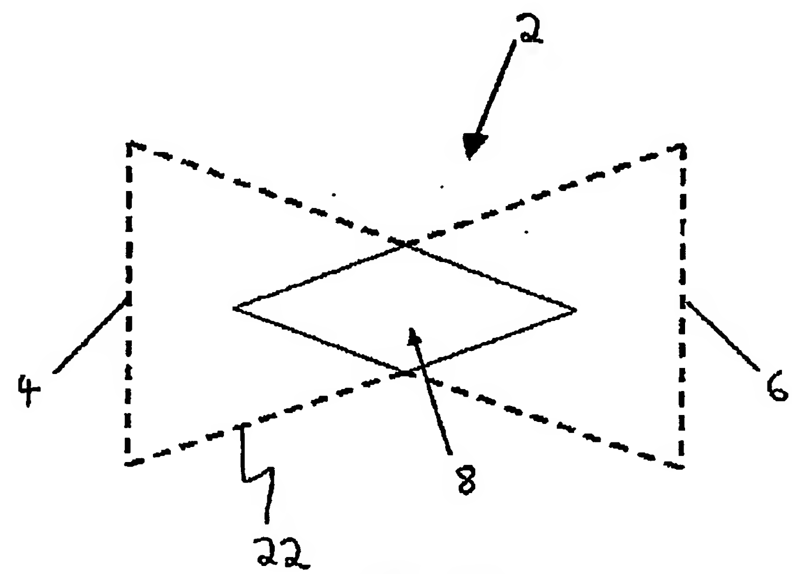

Figure 5

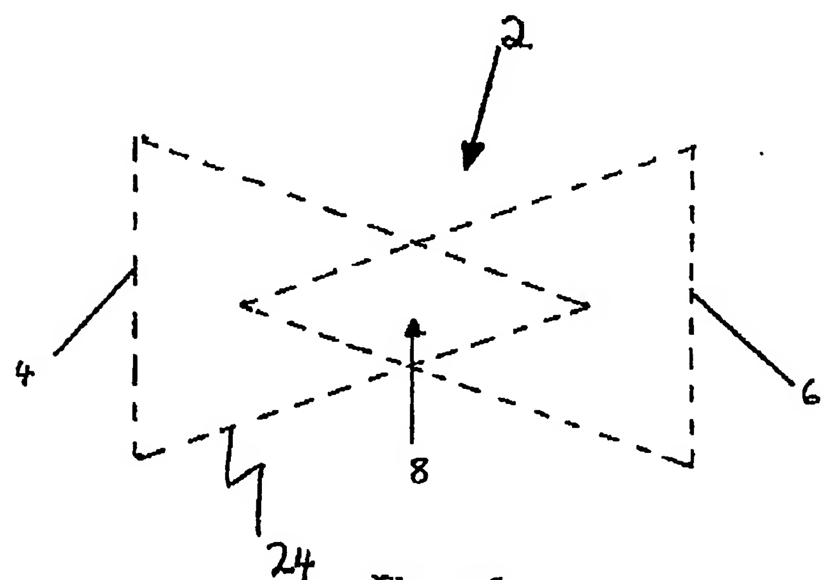

Figure 6

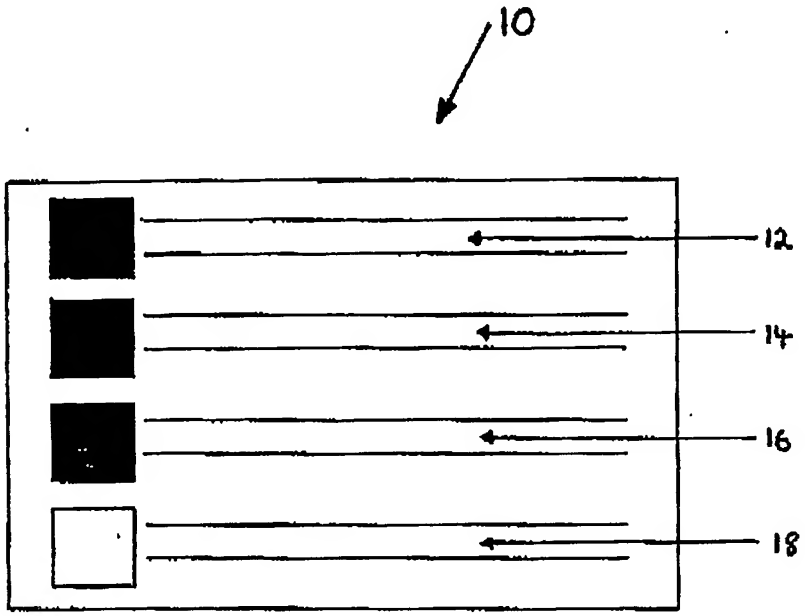

Figure 7

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